

Section 2

BACKGROUND AND EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Normandale Lake District (“District”) encompasses approximately 178 acres, located at the juncture of Interstate 494 and Highway 100. As shown in **Figure 2.1**, below, the District is bound on the north by I-494, on the south by West 84th Street, on the west by East Bush Lake Road, and on the east by properties along Stanley Avenue. The District contains about 15% of the city’s 20-year commercial and residential potential.



Normandale Lake lies just south of the District.

Figure 2.1 Study Area



Source: Bloomington Planning Division.

2.1 Planning Context and History

The District has been planned for high intensity commercial development since the first citywide land use plan was adopted in 1963. The northwest quadrant of Bloomington, including the District, has been the subject of several area-specific plans over the past few decades, including:

- The *Western Area Plan* - 1975
- The *Land Use and Transportation Study (LUTS)* - 1990
- The *Northwest District Plan* - 1991

These plans, as well as the *Bloomington Comprehensive Plan*, have supported the vision of creating a high intensity commercial development node in this area, taking advantage of its excellent

access to the regional transportation system. The plans have consistently recommended intensive office development complemented by a mix of retail and residential uses to create a major employment node, which in turn can foster and sustain transit service.

District Characteristics

Major Employment Center

The District is a major employment center, both regionally and within Bloomington. The area is recognized in the Twin Cities metropolitan region for its concentration of prime Class A office space. It contains the highest concentration of office space in Bloomington and has the second highest concentration of employment in the city, currently accounting for about 9% of total city employment.

Concentration of Class A Office Space

Office space in the District has maintained consistently high rents for comparable products within the region and specifically the I-494 corridor. **Table 2.1**, next page, lists the major office buildings in the District. All but two (Southgate and the Highland Bank) are located in the office park west of Normandale Boulevard.

In 1966, the area around West 84th Street at Stanley Road had lots of space available for development along I-494, shown in the upper left side of this photo.



Exceptional Access and Assets

The area offers direct connections to regional roadways (I-494 and TH 100), proximity and access to Normandale Lake Park (a unit of the Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Regional Park Preserve) and a mix of restaurants, retail, personal services, and day care that serves area office workers and residents.

Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Regional Park Reserve

The reserve is a primary amenity for the District. With paved trails for recreational users and destinations such as Bush Lake Beach, West Bush

Lake Park, Richardson Nature Center, a downhill ski area and an Olympic sized 70 meter ski jump facility, the Park Reserve is the second most visited park facility in the metropolitan area. The Park Reserve's 1000+ acres of open space and wetlands along with Nine Mile Creek, which winds through the area, give the District a distinctive natural character.

District Characteristics

- Major Employment Center.
- Concentration of Class A Office Space.
- Exceptional Access and Assets.
- Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Regional Park Reserve.

Table 2.1: Major Office Buildings (Over 4 Stories) in the District, 1970 to 2007

Building Address	Project Name	Year Built	Floor Area Area (s.f.)	Parcel Area (s.f.)	F.A.R.	Stories
5001 American Blvd. W.	Southgate	1970	265,658	380,412	0.53	10
8201 Norman Center Dr.	8201 Building	1973	92,605	166,900	0.11	5
8300 Norman Center Dr.	8300 Tower	1982	309,364	228,178	1.36	12
5600 W. 84th St.	8400 Tower	1984	461,748	255,814	1.81	17
5800 W. 84th St.	8500 Tower	1986	521,046	227,582	2.29	23
5270 W. 84th St.	Highland Bank	1986	60,767	111,332	0.55	5
5601 Green Valley Dr.	Norman Pointe I	1999	221,145	312,595	0.71	7
8331 Norman Center Dr.	8000 Tower	2000	265,492	175,171	1.52	12
5600 Green Valley Dr.	Norman Pointe II	2006	332,000	264,017	1.26	10
5600 W. 83rd St.	8200 Tower	2007	285,000	269,636	1.06	11

Source: Bloomington Planning Division.

2.2 Land Use and Development Patterns



Just to the south of the District is Normandale Lake and the Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Regional Park Reserve.

Existing land uses in the District consist of a mix of office, hotels, freeway-oriented commercial, neighborhood-oriented retail, and multiple-family development (both rental and owner-occupied).

A tabulation of the District's area by land use and zoning designation is shown on **Tables 2.2 and 2.3** (pages 2.6 and 2.7). Exclusive of road right-of-way, the District consists of approximately 178 acres. **Figures 2.2 and 2.3** illustrate the existing land use and zoning designations in the District and adjacent areas.

The District exhibits very different development patterns and character east and west of Normandale Boulevard (TH 100).

East of Normandale Boulevard

The area is a mix of commercial and residential uses and a variety of building types. The east side development pattern and character is typical of older suburban commercial strip development.

- Along the highway frontage, land uses consist primarily of multi-story hotels and offices and single story commercial or industrial uses.
- A neighborhood commercial center, consisting of a strip retail center, a freestanding bank, restaurants, gas/convenience store, and a fitness club, is located north of West 84 Street, between Normandale Boulevard and Stanley Avenue.
- Parking is predominantly provided in surface lots, resulting in large

areas of pavement and poor interior circulation with few pedestrian accommodations. Planned changes to the Normandale Boulevard/I-494 interchange will further degrade interior circulation.

Residential development on the east side of the District consists of older apartment complexes built in the mid-1960s. This land use provides a transition between the neighborhood commercial center and the single-family residential neighborhood located just east of the District.

- Multi-family residential properties were developed consistent with the styles and development regulations of the mid-1960s that fostered standardized building setbacks, landscaped yard areas, detached multiple garages and surface parking lots.
- Required yard areas are the primary open space amenity and provide little, if any, utility other than passive landscaping.

While not as prevalent on the east side of the District, there are a number of open spaces located along the eastern boundary of the District. These include natural ponds that have become stormwater ponds between American Boulevard and 84th Street, east of Stanley Avenue, as well as the stormwater pond constructed by Mn/DOT after the last I-494 improvement project in 2005.

West of Normandale Boulevard

The District has developed in a 'campus-like' or 'office park' manner, with adjacent high-quality multi-family development.

- Offices consist of high density, tall (10+ story) office buildings with adjoining parking structures.
- Residential development consists of high-quality townhomes and condominiums.
- The area is interspersed with open space, including Nine Mile Creek and its associated wetlands.
- Development takes advantage of lake views and visibility from I-494.

• Normandale Lake and surrounding parkland provide an attractive setting for both office and residential developments.

• Well-maintained landscaping, an integrated trail system, and natural landscapes create an attractive environment for walking and bicycling and provide a visual connection to the adjacent parkland.

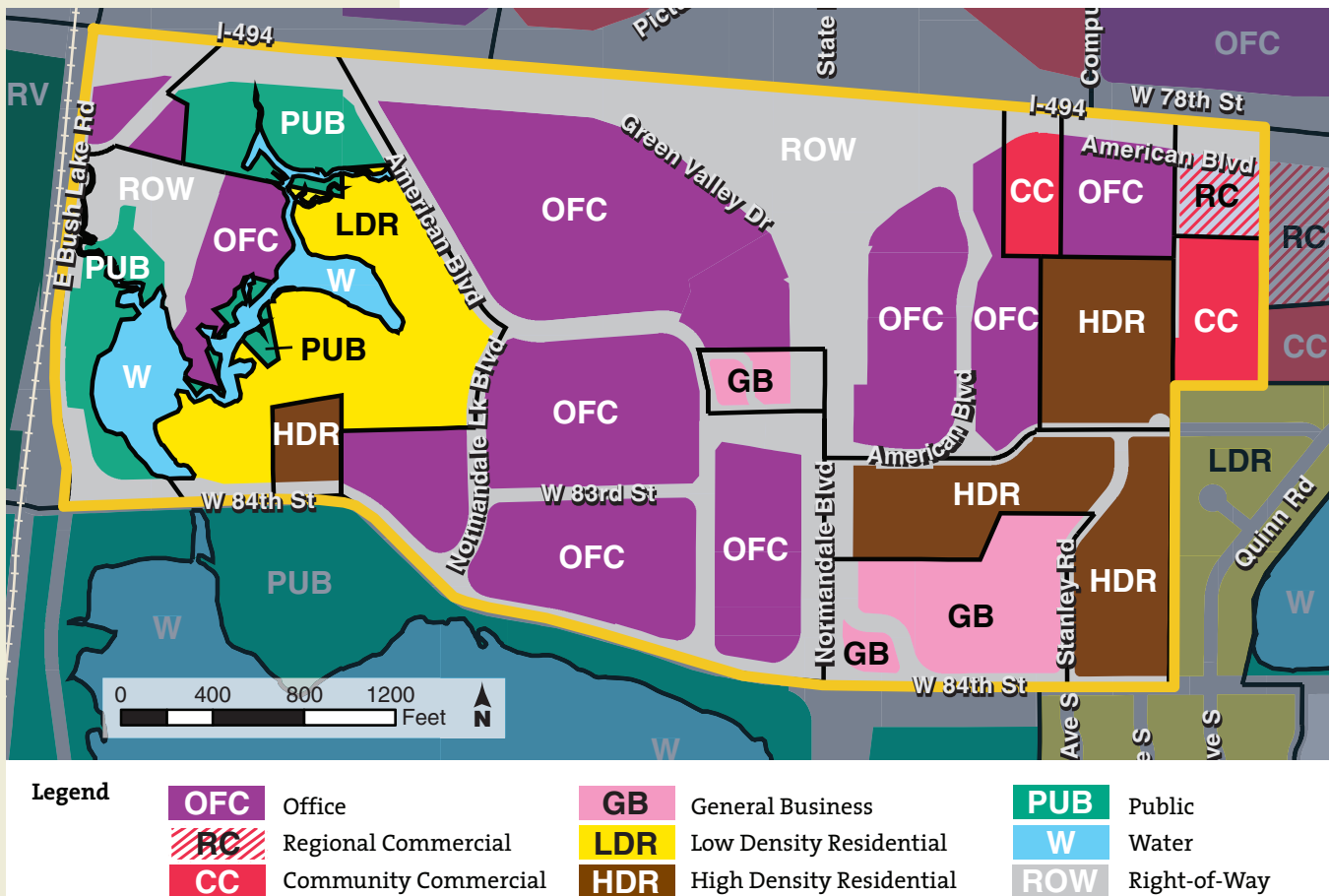


Looking south over the District, I-494 is in the foreground, Pauly Pond is on the left, and Normandale Lake is to the right (west) of Normandale Boulevard.

Table 2.2: Existing Land Use Guide Designations

Land Use Guide	Intended Uses	Acres	%
Office (OFC)	Professional offices, hotels (if near freeway).	92.89	52.0
Community Commercial (CC)	Medium scale service and retail, such as supermarkets, restaurants, theatres, offices. Excludes “big box” retail, hospitals, large shopping centers, and automobile sales.	8.01	4.5
Regional Commercial (RC)	Similar to Community Commercial, but allows “big box” retail, large shopping centers, and automobile sales.	2.86	1.6
General Business (GB)	Neighborhood commercial nodes, including smaller supermarkets, drug stores, restaurants, gas stations, offices. Excludes hotels, “big box” retail, medium and large shopping centers, automobile rental and sales.	12.74	7.2
Low Density Residential (LDR)	Residential development with density of 5 or fewer units per acre. Typically single-family homes. Can also be two-family and low-density townhomes.	16.07	9.0
High Density Residential (HDR)	Residential development with density of 10 or more units per acre. Typically apartments and condominiums.	27.97	15.7
Public (PUB)	Parks, schools, fire stations, municipal buildings, public open spaces.	17.81	10.0
Right-of-Way (ROW)	Public streets, utility corridors, etc.	NA	

Source: Bloomington Planning Division.

Figure 2.2 Existing Land Use Map


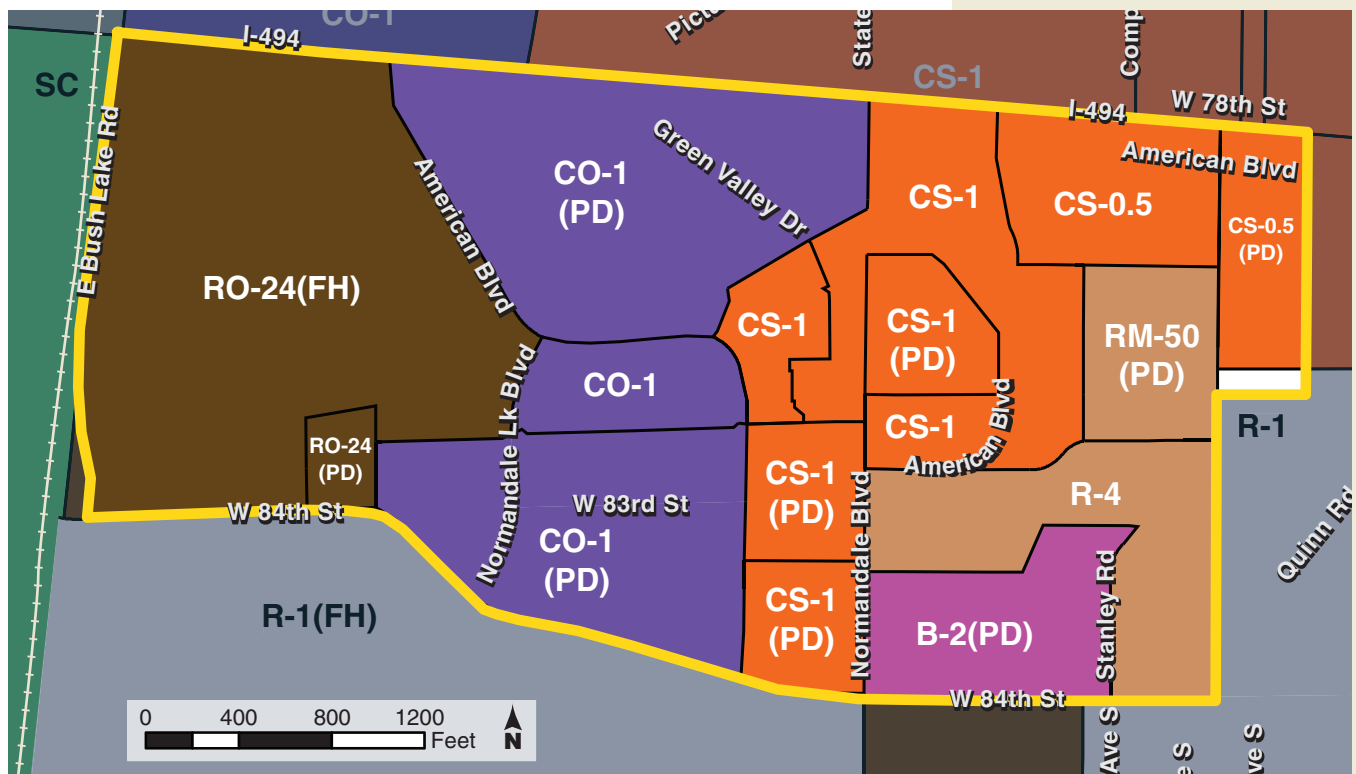
Source: Bloomington Planning Division.

Table 2.3: Existing Zoning Designations

Zoning	Typical Uses Permitted	Acres	%
CO-1 (PD)	Commercial Office (Planned Development) – Offices, public uses, transit stations. Maximum floor area ratio of 1.0.	51.26	28.6
CS-0.5	Commercial Service – Retail stores, banks, restaurants, automotive services and some motor vehicle sales. Maximum floor area ratio of 0.5.	9.88	5.5
CS-0.5 (PD)	Commercial Service (Planned Development) – Same as CS-0.5 but approved as PD.	8.09	4.5
CS-1	Commercial Service – Retail stores, banks, restaurants, automotive services and some motor vehicle sales. Maximum floor area ratio of 1.0.	12.01	6.7
CS-1 (PD)	Commercial Service (Planned Development) – Same as CS-1, but approved as PD.	16.85	9.5
B-2 (PD)	General Commercial (Planned Development) – Office, retail, service, restaurant, auto fueling and service; approved as a PD.	11.12	6.2
R-4	Multiple-Family – Single-family homes, dwellings for two or more families, senior housing, churches.	17.44	9.8
RO-24	Residential Office – Mix of high density residential dwellings with integrated office uses.	41.59	23.4
RO-24 (PD)	Residential Office – Planned Development. Same as RO-24, but approved as PD.	0.88	0.5
RM-50 (PD)	Multiple-Family – Planned Development. Apartments, condos, senior housing, with densities of 20 to 50 units per acre.	9.64	5.4

Source: Bloomington Planning Division.

Figure 2.3 Existing Zoning Map



Legend	B-2 Neighborhood Business	CO-1 Commercial Office	R-1 Single Family Residential
	CS-1 Commercial Service	RO-24 Residential Office	R-4 Multiple Family Residential

Source: Bloomington Planning Division.



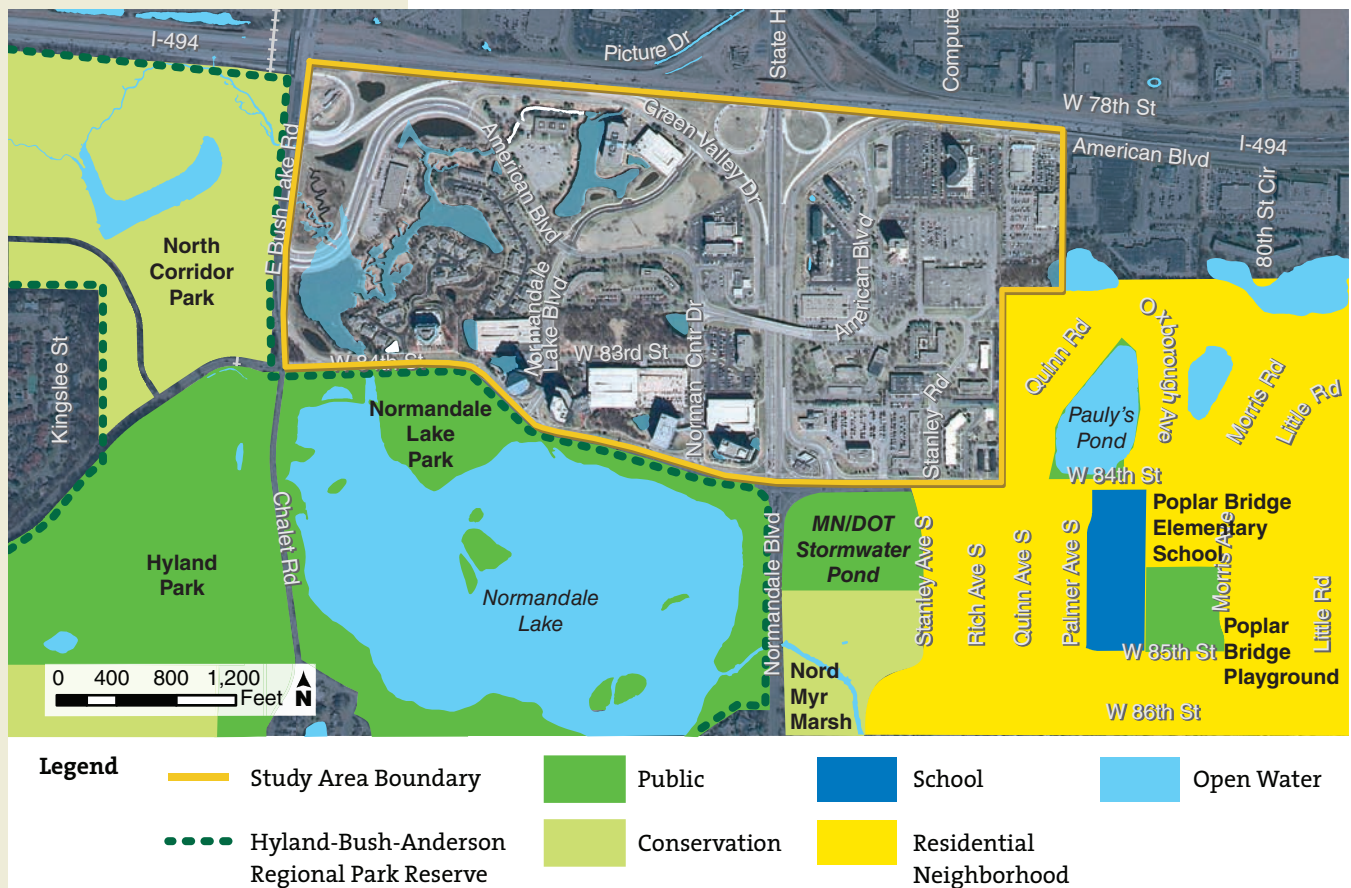
Single-family neighborhoods, mostly built in the 1960s and 70s, surround the District.

Surrounding Land Uses

Single-family neighborhoods, mostly built in the 1960s and 70s, surround the District on the east, west, and south. Concerns about mitigating traffic and the visual impacts of development on neighborhood character are particularly important to neighborhoods immediately adjacent to the District. The area to the south and west is bound by the Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Regional Park Reserve and North Corridor Park, respectively. Just southeast of the intersection of

Normandale Boulevard and West 84th Street is a landscaped and bermed stormwater treatment pond owned by Mn/DOT (aka Goldman Pond). **Figure 2.4**, below, shows the pattern of existing development, parks and schools surrounding the District.

Figure 2.4 Surrounding Land Use



Source: Bloomington Planning Division.

2.3 Movement and Circulation Patterns

The District contains a range of office, retail commercial and residential destinations that generate high volumes of vehicle traffic, particularly during weekday peak hours. In addition, Normandale Lake Park and the Regional Park Reserve draw pedestrians and bicyclists from the nearby residential neighborhoods and the office park, as well as from around the entire metropolitan region.

Vehicle Movement

The District has direct access to the regional transportation system via I-494 and TH 100. Local roads, particularly American Boulevard and West 84th Street, provide good east-west access between the District and other parts of Bloomington. American Boulevard provides an east-west arterial route through Bloomington, parallel to I-494. Its western terminus, at East Bush Lake Road, is in the District. West 84th Street runs parallel to American Boulevard across northwestern Bloomington, between East Bush Lake Road and Penn Avenue.

North-south roads mostly provide access to individual properties within the District. East of Normandale Boulevard, connections between West 84th Street and American Boulevard are limited. Adding a north-south connection by extending Stanley Road to American Boulevard, has been identified in the City's comprehensive plan as a

long-term project. This plan continues to identify the Stanley Road connection as a long-term project to improve circulation in the District. Construction of this extension will be timed in conjunction with development of abutting properties.

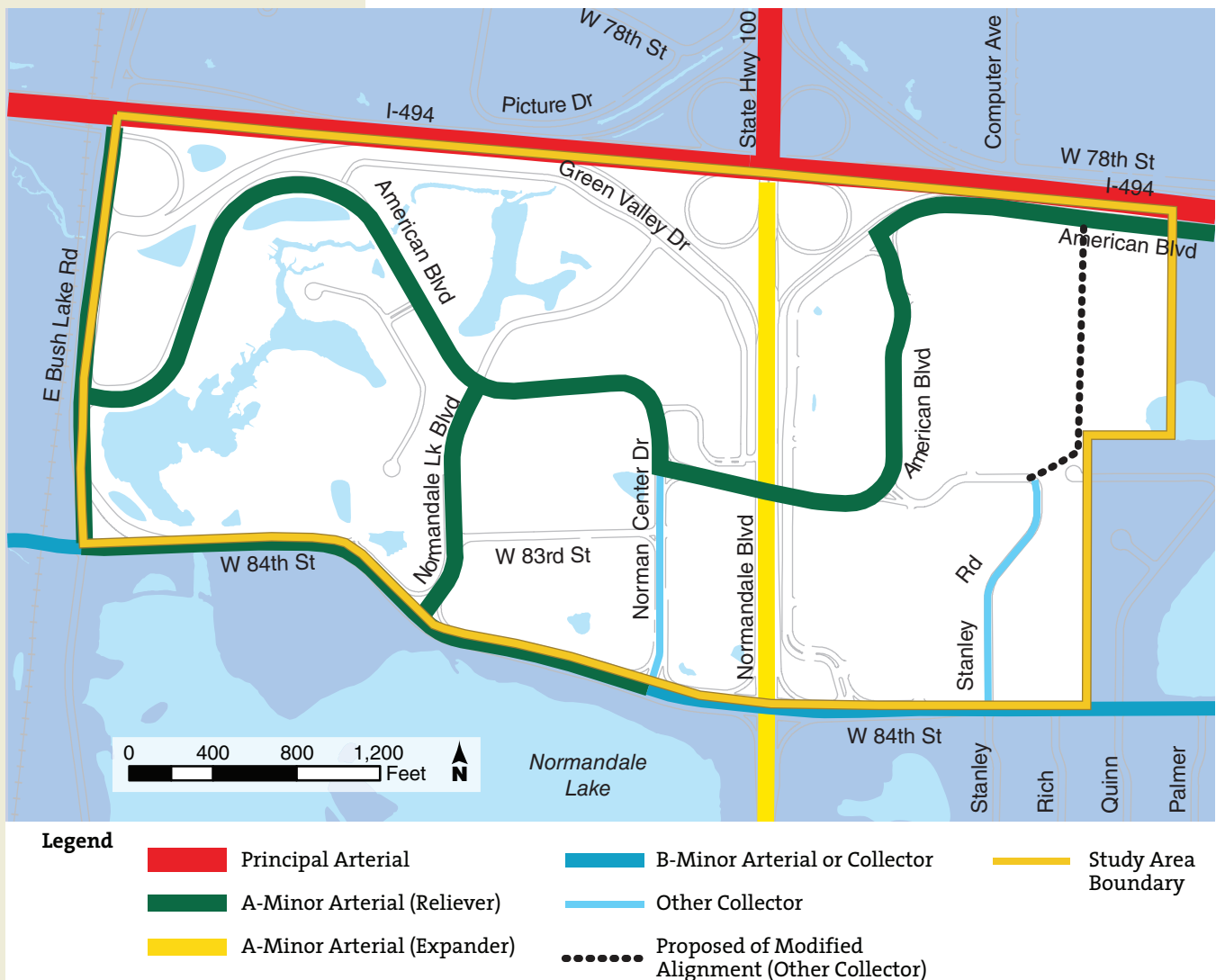
Figure 2.5 (page 2.10) illustrates the functional classification of roads in the District. Following are some observations about existing vehicle movement:

- Segments of the regional highway network surrounding the District currently experience periods of significant congestion during the morning and afternoon peak periods.
- In order to avoid congestion on I-494, many drivers (including Bloomington residents) use the local arterial roads, particularly American Boulevard and West 84th Street. This increases congestion on these and other local streets in and around the District resulting in “cut through” traffic.
- Some turning movements at the intersection of Normandale Boulevard and West 84th Street currently experience congestion during peak travel periods.
- Even without planned future development, growth in background traffic will worsen congestion levels unless significant changes are made to increase the capacity of the intersection.



The wide range of office, retail commercial and residential destinations in the District generate high volumes of traffic.

Figure 2.5 Road Functional Classification



Source: Bloomington Comprehensive Plan 2000 (Amended April 2004).

- Managing the traffic volumes associated with regional trips and destinations places great demands on the City's street network. Increased trips generate the need to improve the performance and capacity of local roadways.

- Construction of wider roads may have negative effects on surrounding land uses and make it more difficult

to promote a safe, attractive, and comfortable pedestrian and bicycle environment.

The District Plan endeavors to address, balance and mitigate the impacts of these observations.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Movement

Pedestrians and bicyclists can move about in the District using existing roadways, sidewalks and trails, shown on **Figure 2.6**, below. However, not all road segments include sidewalks or trails and there are breaks in sidewalk and trail continuity that impede circulation and movement. High traffic volumes on Normandale Boulevard and West 84th Street present a major challenge for pedestrian and bicycle movement through the District.

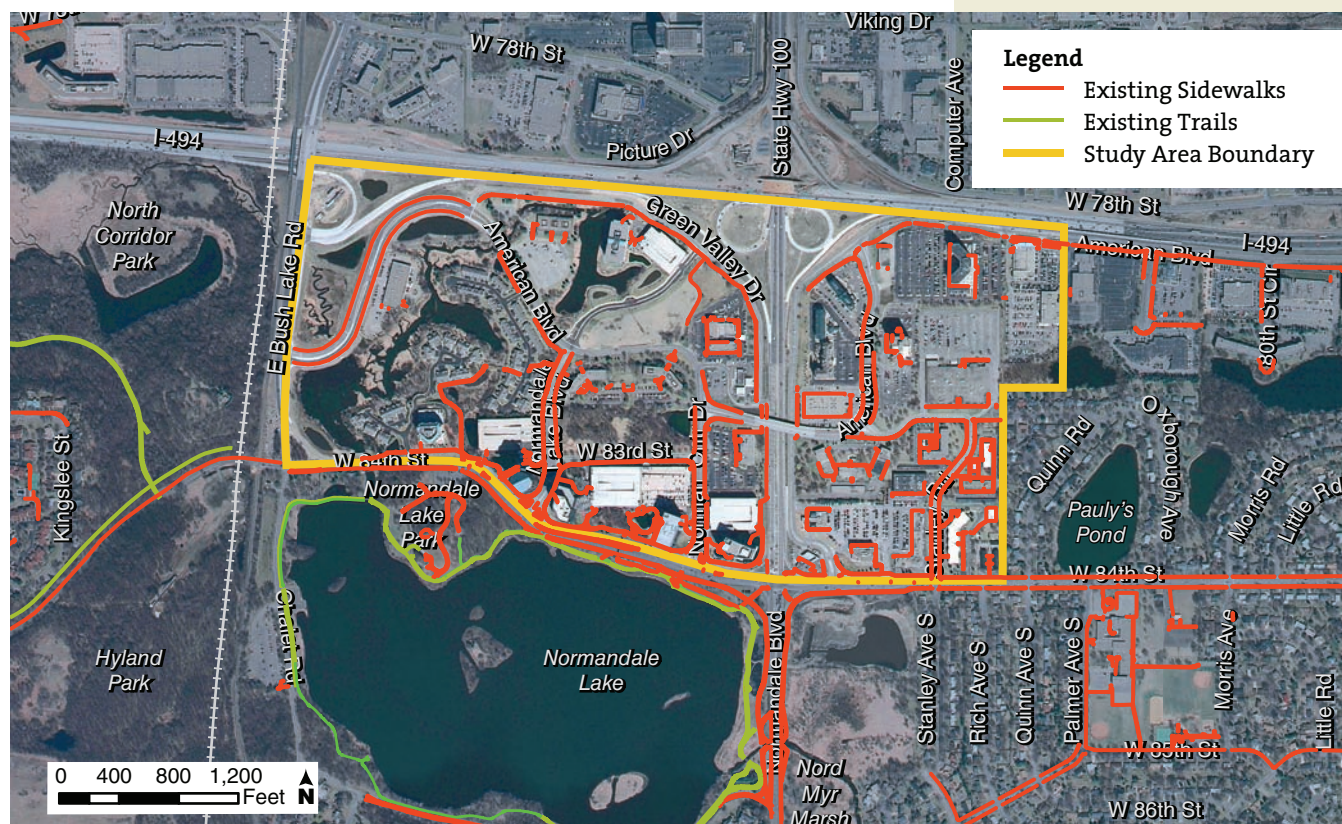
Some observations about existing pedestrian and bicycle movement include:

- An existing trail around Normandale Lake connects to an extensive trail system within the Hyland-Bush-Anderson Regional Park Reserve and North Corridor Park.
- Access to the park trail system is provided at signal controlled intersections on West 84th Street and by a pedestrian bridge connection to the office park and a pedestrian tunnel under Normandale Boulevard south of West 84th Street.
- In 2006 the City completed a new bikeway trail along East Bush Lake Road between West 84th and 105th



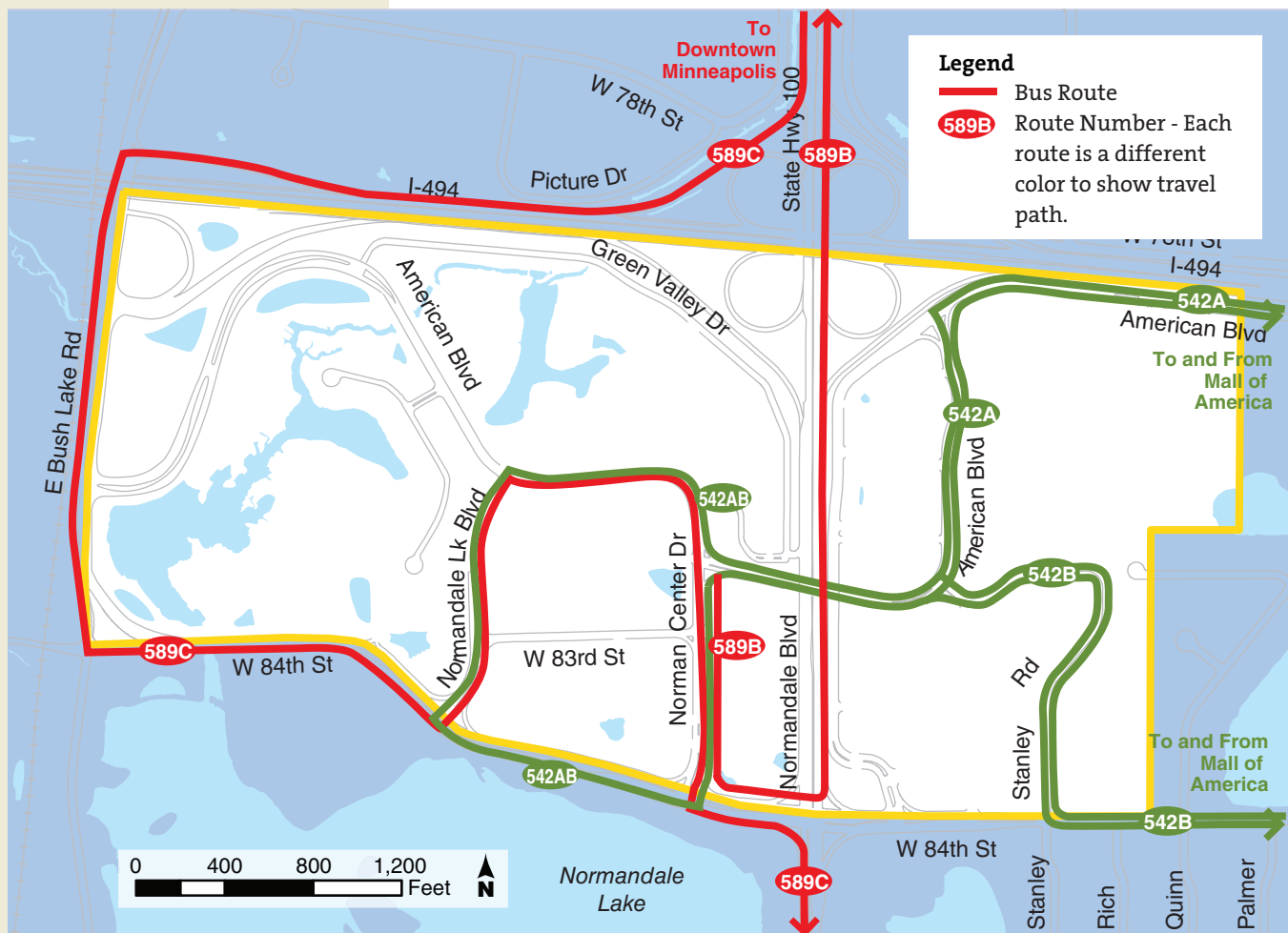
Pedestrians and bicyclists can move about in the District using existing roadways, sidewalks and trails.

Figure 2.6 Existing Sidewalks and Trails



Source: Bloomington Engineering Division.

Figure 2.7 Existing Transit Routes



Source: Metro Transit.

Street that serves as a major north-south bikeway link.

- Normandale Boulevard physically separates the east and west halves of the District. Crossing is currently allowed at: 1) the signalized intersection at West 84th Street; 2) on the American Boulevard bridge; or 3) through the pedestrian underpass located adjacent to Nine Mile Creek.

Transit Service

Transit service is available within the District for trips within Bloomington and the region, including express service to downtown Minneapolis. Metro Transit operates three routes

that serve the District described below and shown on **Figure 2.7**, above.

- **Route 589**, an express route, provides service to and from downtown Minneapolis during the AM and PM peak hours, Monday through Friday. While this route mostly serves this area as an origin for outbound morning trips and destination for inbound afternoon trips, it also provides limited “reverse commute” buses from downtown Minneapolis to the Normandale Lake Office Park and western Bloomington on weekday mornings and returning in the afternoon.

- **Route 578** provides weekday service through Edina to and from downtown Minneapolis during AM and PM peak hours only.

- **Routes 540 and 542** provide weekday “cross-town” service adjacent to the I-494 corridor to the Mall of America. From the MOA, connections can be made to the Hiawatha LRT line, which provides service to the MSP International Airport and downtown Minneapolis.

Some observations about existing transit service:

- All of the routes provide fairly frequent (15-30 minute interval) service during morning and afternoon peak hours on weekdays.
- Service during non-peak times is less frequent and none of the routes

provide any weekend service.

- The consequence of this schedule is that transit service for workers and residents in the District is not convenient unless their primary transit needs coincide with the weekday peak hours.

- Western Bloomington is currently viewed by Metro Transit primarily as an origin for outbound trips on weekday mornings and a destination for inbound trips on weekday afternoons.

- Given the amount of additional employment projected in the office park, Metro Transit has indicated a willingness to consider this area as a trip destination as employment numbers increase. This will result in some modifications of route schedules to enhance “reverse commute” service during weekday peak hours.



Buses serve the District for trips within Bloomington and the region, including express service to downtown Minneapolis.

2.4 Existing Utilities

The District is served by the City’s municipal sanitary sewer system and water system, shown in **Figures 2.8** (page 2.14) and **2.9** (page 2.15). Both systems are essentially fully developed in accordance with sound utility modeling, engineering, and construction practices. Upgrades will continue to occur in conjunction with routine maintenance or to accommodate new development or redevelopment.

Public Sanitary Sewer System

The sanitary sewer system consists of components (collection mains, interceptors and lift stations) that are owned and operated by the City

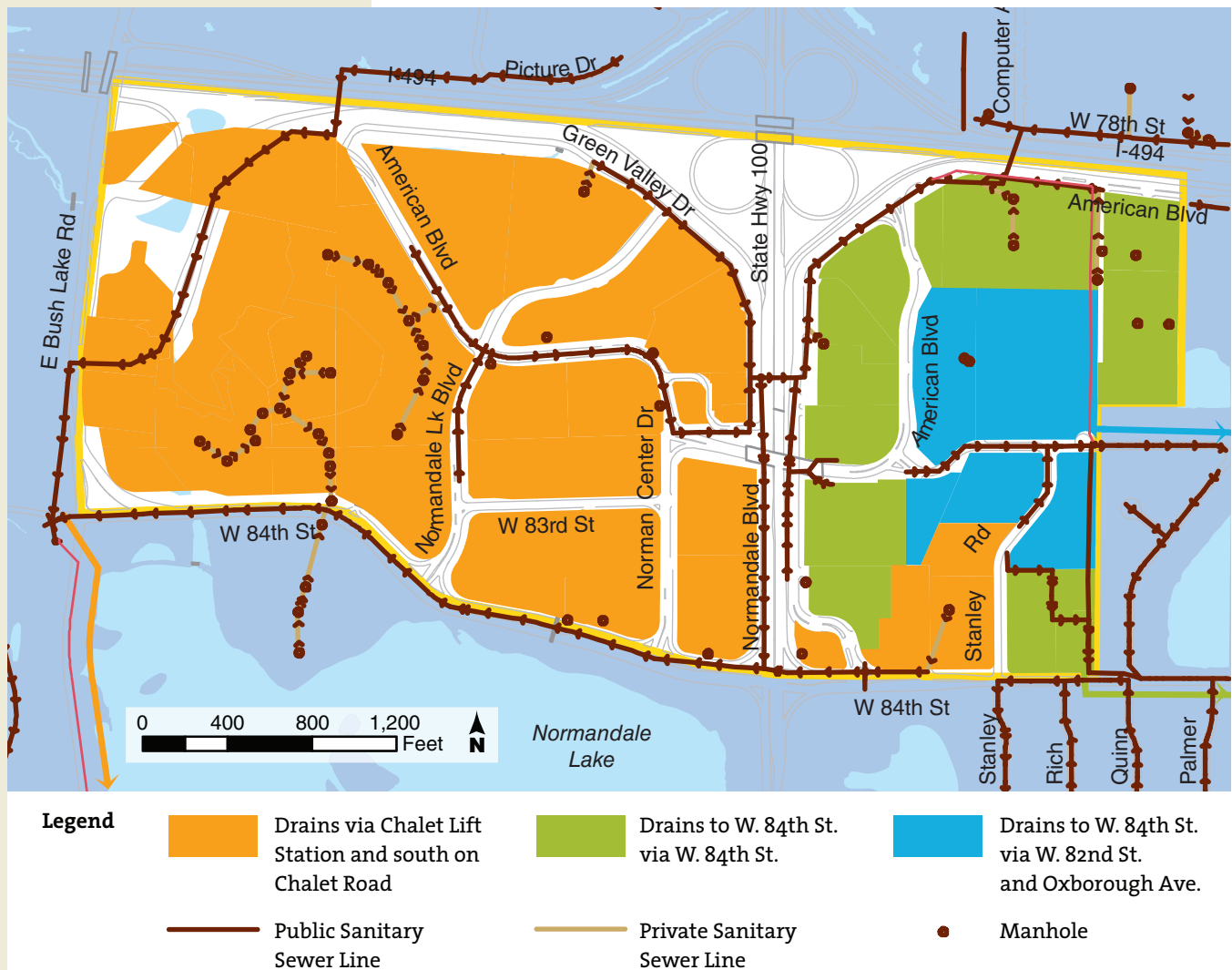
and components owned and operated by the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services (MCES). Sanitary sewer treatment is provided by the MCES Seneca Facility in Eagan. The existing system has adequate capacity to serve existing development.

The District is divided into two sub-sewer sheds with separate collection systems. The sewer lines receiving wastewater from the west side of District have adequate capacity to serve planned development through 2030. A few parcels on the east side of Normandale Boulevard are also served by the western sub-sewer shed, including the shopping center, the bank, and the



Both the public water and sanitary sewer systems are essentially fully developed.

Figure 2.8 Existing Sanitary Sewer System



Source: Bloomington Utilities Division.

City crews are upgrading the sanitary sewer system.



Holiday convenience store/gas station. The remainder of the east side of the District is in a different sub-sewer shed served by a regional sewer interceptor (3-BN-499) that is part of the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services (MCES) system.

- The City recently completed a preliminary evaluation of sanitary sewer capacity in the area. The sewer model identified future capacity shortfalls in the regional sewer

interceptor 3-BN-499, which serves much of the east side of the District and portions of Edina.

- Given future development plans in both Bloomington and Edina, upgrades to this interceptor will be required to accommodate future development.
- Bloomington and Edina staff are currently working together with MCES staff on a solution to ensure adequate capacity to serve planned growth in both cities.

Public Water System

The Bloomington water system has three components: water supply, water treatment and distribution network. Water supply and treatment are located outside of the District. Some characteristics of the public water system include:

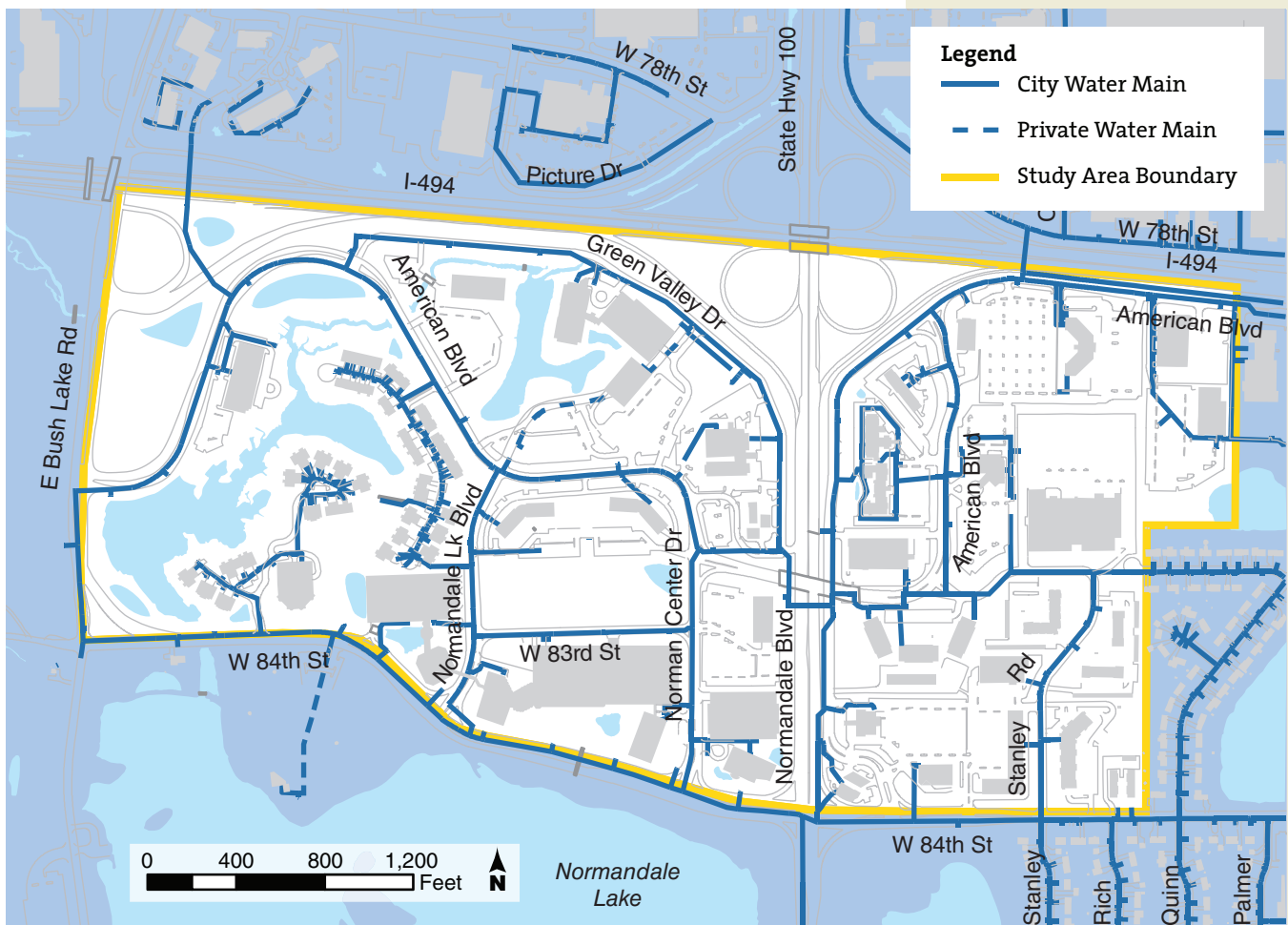
- The existing water system capacity is adequate to accommodate anticipated future development beyond 2030.

- The District is in the normal water pressure zone area of the City. The City's *Water System Master Plan* does not identify pressure deficiencies within the District.



The existing water system capacity is adequate to accommodate anticipated future development beyond 2030.

Figure 2.9 Existing Water Distribution System



Source: Bloomington Utilities Division.



The District includes approximately 12 wetland areas that are part of the area's hydrology.

2.5 Existing Stormwater Management

Stormwater management is particularly important in the District because of its relationship to natural resources within the area, particularly Nine Mile Creek. Urban stormwater runoff drains to receiving bodies of water that have natural resource values and are often associated with resources in the park and open space system. The need to maintain clean and healthy water bodies is fundamental in all urban ecosystems.

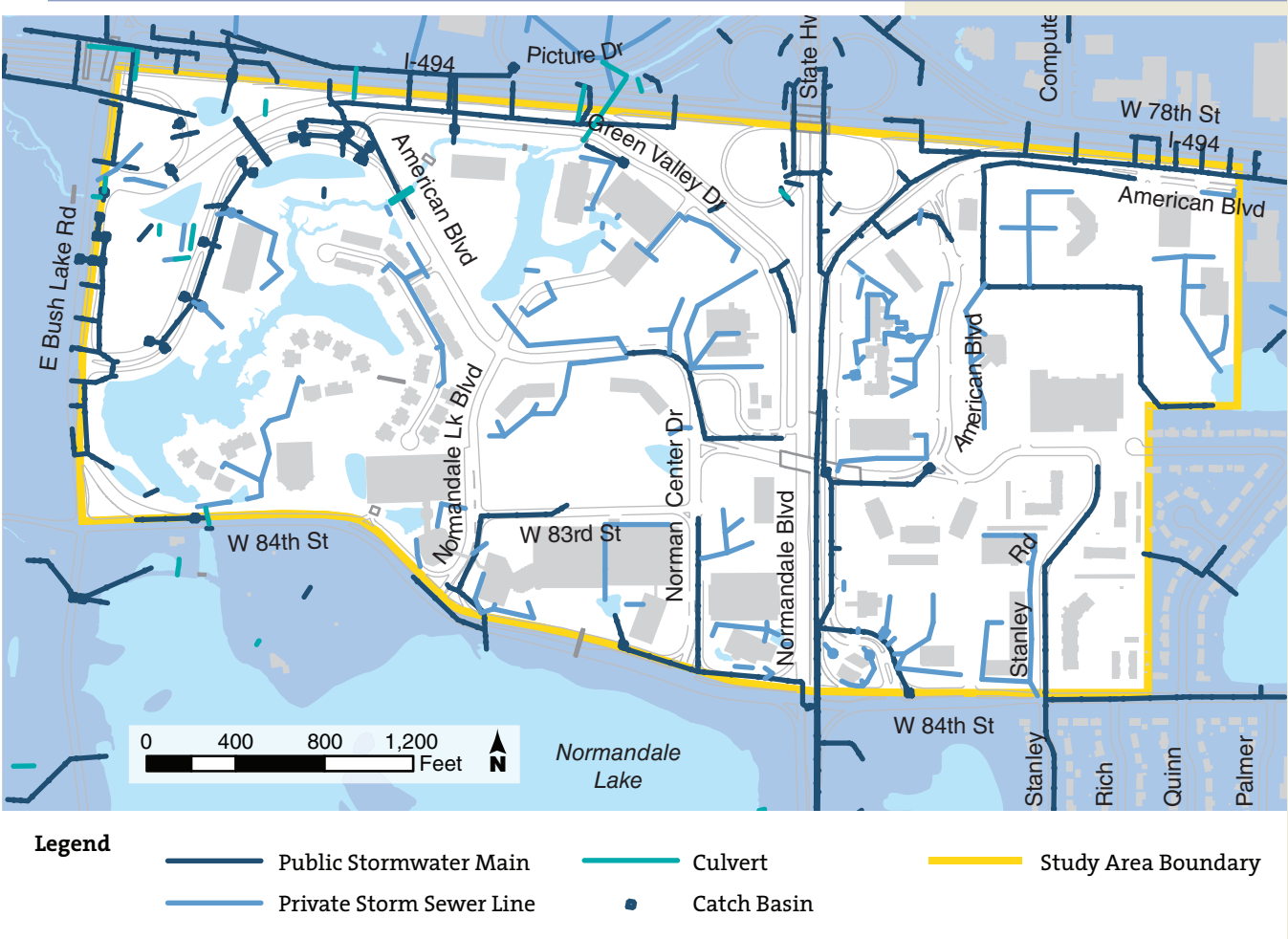
The District is within the jurisdiction of the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District (NMCWD), which has adopted a watershed management plan for surface waters within the watershed. The City updated its *Comprehensive Stormwater Management Plan* in October 2007. This plan outlines the City's requirements for stormwater quantity and water quality. The City works cooperatively with NMCWSD to implement goals and programs aimed at protecting water resources.

The District includes portions of two sub-watersheds—Upper Nine Mile Creek and Skriebakken Pond. These sub-watersheds comprise approximately 3,960 acres in total area. The District constitutes about 6.5% of the area of the combined sub-watersheds.

Surface runoff from properties in the District discharge to a series of ponds before entering existing storm sewers, that convey the runoff to Nord Myr Marsh and Nine Mile Creek. Nine Mile Creek (including the main branch and north branch) is the main receiving body for stormwater runoff. Additional stormwater basins contributing to Nine Mile Creek include Normandale Lake, Mn/DOT stormwater pond (aka Goldman Pond), Victoria Pond, and Wanda Miller Pond. In addition to stormwater basins, the area includes approximately 12 wetland areas that are part of the hydrology.

Figure 2.10, next page, illustrates the existing system of stormwater pipes and basins. To accommodate projected growth to 2030, some upgrades to the existing system will be needed. These will occur in conjunction with specific development proposals.

Figure 2.10 Existing Stormwater System



Source: Bloomington Utilities Division.

This Mn/DOT stormwater pond (aka Goldman Pond) contributes to Nine Mile Creek.





Natural habitat in the District coincides primarily with the wetlands and public water bodies located west of Normandale Boulevard.

2.6 Environmental Patterns and Characteristics

The District and its immediate surroundings are characterized by a range of park, open space and aquatic resources, many of which are associated with Nine Mile Creek and the Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Regional Park Reserve. No ecologically sensitive resources have been identified within the District boundaries.

Vegetation and Habitat

The District is identified in the *Environmental Protection Element of the Bloomington Comprehensive Plan 2000* as “urban with vegetation” and “urban without vegetation”. While the area west of Normandale Boulevard has retained a fair amount of vegetation, much of the east side of the District is covered by impervious surfaces (buildings and parking lots) with small patches of lawn/landscaping and minimal tree cover.

Natural habitat coincides primarily with the wetlands and public water bodies located west of Normandale Boulevard. Two branches of Nine Mile Creek flow through the District. The creek and associated wetlands provide habitat for species requiring an aquatic environment, such as fish found in ponding areas of the creek, as well as species requiring both wet and dry environments, such as songbirds and waterfowl. Wetland habitat provides a source of food, water, nesting material and shelter.

The east side of the District is characterized as “urban without vegetation.” In this area, wildlife

species that have adapted to urban landscapes such as gray squirrels, rabbits, and raccoons are more prevalent. The wetland and small woodland area on the adjacent property to the east of the District provides habitat and cover for a variety of species commonly found in the upper Midwest such as woodpeckers, robins, chickadees, skunks, turtles, and amphibians.

Water Resource Quality and Regulation

Upstream stormwater runoff affects nutrient and sediment levels in Nine Mile Creek. Because of these nutrients and sediments, Nine Mile Creek is not classified as a high quality fishery habitat.

West of Normandale Boulevard there are areas within the 100-year floodplain (elevation 816.5 ft, also see **Figure 2.11**, next page.) The City has zoning regulations – the Flood Hazard Overlay District (FH) – that regulate development and land disturbance in the floodplain. The City also has Shore Area Regulations associated with Nine Mile Creek, which designate two zones related to the ordinary high water level (OHWL) or top of bank of the DNR Protected Water. Along Nine Mile Creek, the Shore Area is defined as a 50-foot zone parallel to the top of bank (approximately the 812 foot elevation) while the Shore Area Impact Zone is identified as a 25-foot area parallel to the top of bank. These regulations limit development and encroachment in these areas.

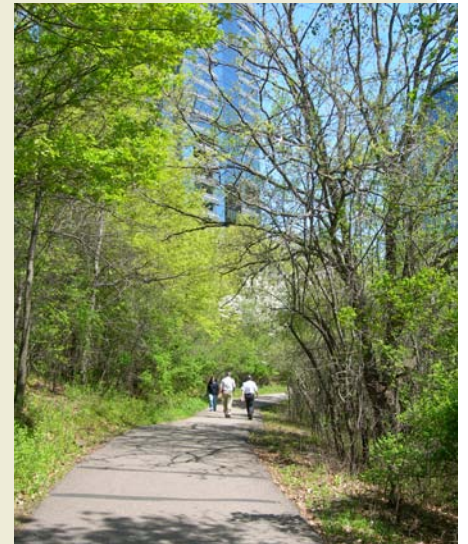
Park and Open Space Features

The District is surrounded by park and open space resources, primarily associated with the Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Regional Park Reserve. The most visually prominent features include Normandale Lake, Hyland Hills Ski Area (Mt. Gilboa), and the Bush Lake Ski Jump. These park and open space resources are unique amenities that provide an attractive setting for area residents and employees.

Key environmental features are shown in **Figure 2.11**, below, and include:

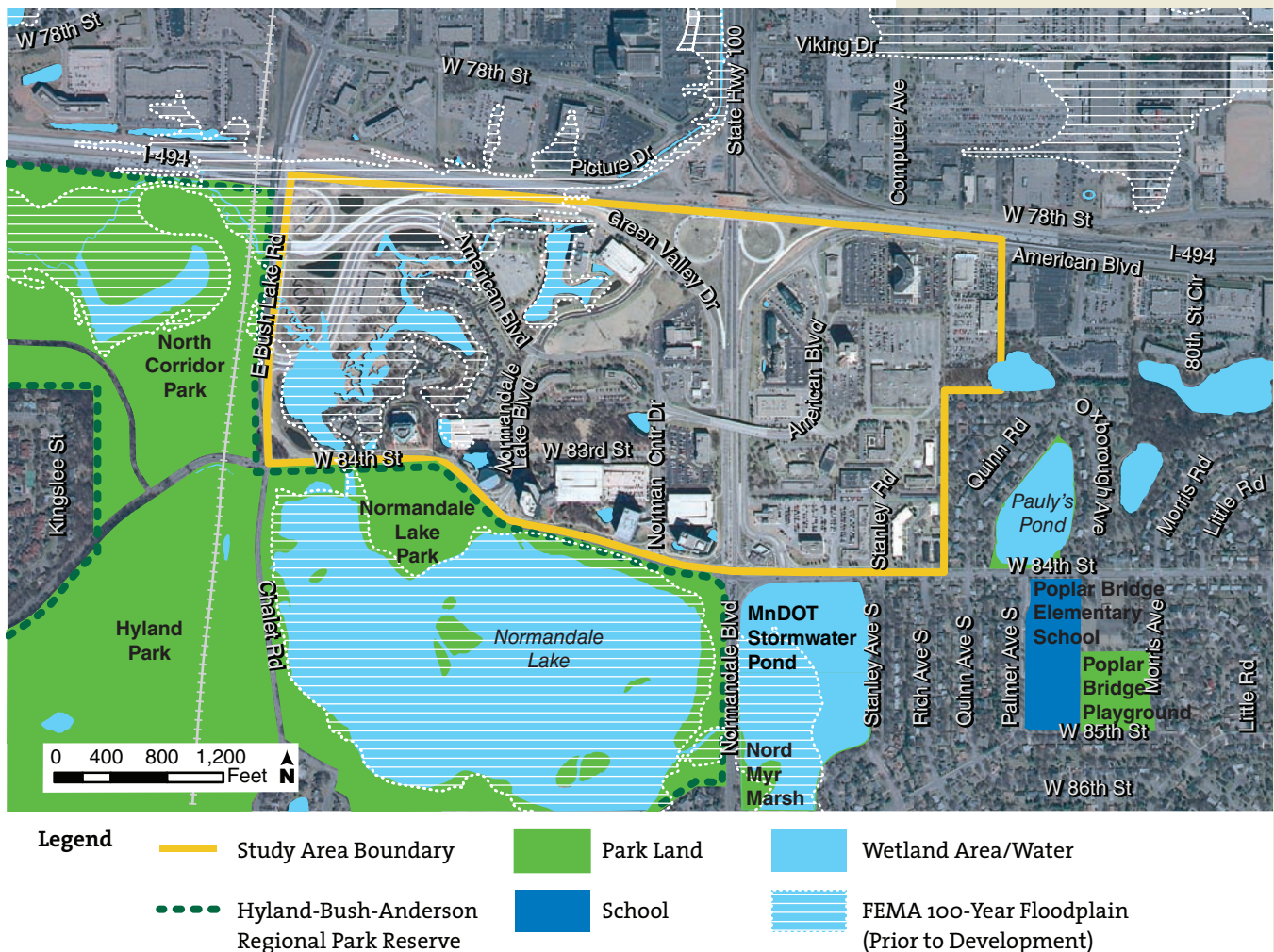
Normandale Lake

The lake was created in 1974 to provide flood control through a joint initiative of the Nine Mile Watershed District and the City of Bloomington. It expanded the open water area of a former wetland and has now become a very popular walking and biking amenity for residents, employees and visitors from other communities.



Walking trails are within easy reach of the District's offices, hotels and residences.

Figure 2.11 Existing Environmental Considerations



Source: Bloomington Planning Division.



Nine Mile Creek winds through the west side of the District lending a natural character to the area.

Nine Mile Creek

The creek, associated wetlands and open spaces wind through the west side of the District lending a natural character to the area. The creek flows under Normandale Boulevard where it enters Nord Myr Marsh – a large wetland complex located south of the District.

Several open spaces

Open spaces located just beyond the District boundary include: stormwater ponds located east of Stanley Avenue and other City and school open spaces or facilities such as Pauly's Pond and Poplar Bridge

Elementary School and playground.

Mn/DOT stormwater pond (aka Goldman Pond)

The pond anchors the southeast corner of the intersection of Normandale Boulevard and West 84th Street. Tall berms were created around the pond and have been heavily landscaped. Given its adjacency to a major intersection, the pond, berms, and landscaping provide a visually prominent feature at the edge of the District and extend the natural character of Normandale Lake Park to the east side of Normandale Boulevard.



Located adjacent to a major intersection, Goldman Pond, its berms, and landscaping provide a visually prominent feature at the southeast edge of the District.